

Executive Summary

In December 1994, Clark County adopted a comprehensive land use plan pursuant to the State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1990. The Clark County 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan identifies key indicators to be compiled and summarized on an annual basis. The Department of Community Development has completed the first analysis of available data, focusing on 1995 through 1999.

This report documents the growth patterns during the first five years of planning under the 1994 State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA). It focuses on population and employment growth rates, price of housing, land absorption, patterns of development, and other land use related issues.

The purpose of the report is to present the monitoring data called for in the adopted comprehensive plan and to provide summary observations.

Not included in this report is discussion of potential implications of the identified trends or of future policy alternatives. It is expected that this report will generate significant discussion on these topics; Community Development staff hope that it provides a valuable starting point for discussion.

Major findings and observations:

Population Overview

The report begins with a review of actual population growth compared with the 1994 forecast.

- Clark County's April 1, 2000 population is estimated at 345,000 by the state Office of Financial Management.
- From 1995 to 2000, Clark County's population increased by 54,000; adding 10,186 (19% of growth) people to the rural areas and 43,814 (81% of growth) to the urban areas.
- This is an overall increase of 18.6% over five years (April 1995 through April 2000), or around 3.7% annually.
- Between 1995 and 2000 population within the UGAs grew by 18.3% and in the rural area by 19.7%.
- The largest real increase in population occurred within the Vancouver UGA which added 34,467 residents; a 16% increase.

- In percentage terms, the fastest growing areas between 1995 and 2000 were the north county UGAs of Battle Ground and La Center.
- The current 2000 population is 4.6% higher than the year 2000 forecast.
- The current 2012 population forecast amounts to adding 20.6% to current population over 12 years.
- The 2000 urban/rural population ratio is 82% urban and 18% rural. The comprehensive plan goal is 81% urban and 19% rural. In 1990 the ratio was 86% / 14% and in 1995 it was 82% / 18%.

Residential Development

- From 1995 through 1999, 15,514 single-family residential units were added countywide. 12,966 (83.6%) were inside urban growth areas (UGA) and 2,548 (16.4%) were outside.
- Between 1995 and 1999 total single-family residential dwelling units increased by 20.8% within the urban growth areas and by 14.6% in the rural area.
- From 1995 through 1999 the number of multi-family units developed countywide was 3,794. Of those units 3,786 were inside the UGA and 8 were in the rural areas.

Employment, Wages and Per Capita Income

The 1994 Comprehensive Plan indicates that by the year 2012 Clark County and its cities would grow in population to an estimated 416,071, and in jobs to an estimated 138,500.

- From 1995 to 1999 Clark County has increased employment by 26,400, an average annual increase of 3.9%.
- Employment as a percentage of the population shows a small average annual gain between 1995 and 1999.
- The 1994-1999 trend shows that the largest sector growth has occurred in services, retail trade, and government, adding 5,200, 4,200 and 3,000 jobs respectively.
- The unemployment rate for Clark County has remained well below the state average.
- Despite the growth in non-farm employment, the average wage in Clark County has remained below the state average.

- Clark County per capita personal income exceeded the national average in 1997. Per capita personal income still falls short of the state income level but is bridging the gap from a low of 7.7% below the state average in 1991 and 1992 to 3.2% in 1997.

Housing Overview

- Over the last four years, the average selling price of an existing home in Clark County increased by more than 25.7%, or an average of 6.4% each year. The average selling price of a new home tells a similar story with an increase of more than 25.8% or an average of 6.5% each year.
- In 1999, the average sale price of a home in Clark County was \$168,080. In 1994, the average price was less than \$134,000.
- Existing and new homes in the rural area are consistently more expensive than homes in the urban area, ranging from 40% to 90% more expensive between 1995 and 1998.
- Existing and new homes in the rural area are consistently larger than homes in the urban area, ranging from 17% to 32% larger, on average, from 1995 through 1998.
- In the first five years of the plan, a total of 19,308 dwelling units were added. During that period about 80% of the new housing units in Clark County were single-family homes. Multi-family units account for 20% of new dwelling unit capacity.

Note: The Clark County Comprehensive Plan assumed that 60% of new residential development would be single-family with 40% multi-family.

Land Absorption

This report compares the vacant lands analysis that was done in late 1994 and the beginning of 1995, as part of the adoption of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, with the 2000 available vacant residential, commercial, and industrial lands.

- In 1995, there were about 16,401 gross acres of vacant and underutilized (see glossary and appendices for definition and description of these categories) residential lands in the UGA compared to 10,248 gross acres in 2000 within the county UGAs. Since 1995, about 6,153 acres or 38%, of available residential acres have been absorbed by development.
- In the Vancouver UGA, approximately 24% of total available vacant and underutilized residential lands were absorbed between 1995 to 2000; approximately 425 acres per year.

- In the Vancouver UGA, 1,631 acres of vacant commercial lands are identified in 2000, compared with 2,329 in 1995. 30% of available commercial lands were developed.
- The Vancouver UGA also has 5,315 acres of vacant industrial lands identified in 2000 versus 5,562 in 1995, a 4% change.
- Camas, La Center and Yacolt absorbed more than 60% of their available vacant and underutilized residential land since 1995. For the Camas UGA, it is important to note that in 1995 the Camas Meadows area was designated as residential. This area of approximately 600 acres was annexed to the city in 1996 and the designation changed to industrial. This change in underlying land use designation should be considered when viewing land absorption rates by type for Camas.
- Washougal and Battle Ground have absorbed 42% and 40% of vacant and underutilized residential land respectively, since 1995.

Note: Clark County code requires that 75% of available residential land be absorbed within a UGA before expansion of the growth boundary can be considered.

Buildable lots in rural area

The vacant and buildable lands identification model, developed in a geographic information system by Clark County Assessment and GIS staff for plan monitoring, does not include rural areas (outside of UGAs). In order to assess development potential in the rural areas, a separate but parallel model process was developed.

- There are about 10,047 vacant parcels (excluding lots less than an acre, tax exempt and state-assessed parcel) in the rural area.
- Given the underlying zoning, total additional development potential in the rural areas is estimated to be 13,577 lots. At 2.6 persons per household, additional rural capacity is approximately 35,300 persons.

Urban versus Rural Development

Where are we today (1999) and where were we in 1994?

- In 1995, the urban versus rural population split was 82% urban and 18% rural.
- In 1999, the urban versus rural population split was 83% urban and 17% rural.

Development in the rural area remains strong. It is driven, in part, by the fact that Clark County has a majority of the vacant rural residential lots in the Portland metropolitan area. In the three-county area in Oregon (Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington) there are currently 12,731 vacant lots of 5 acres or less. In Clark County there are 13,577 lots of 5 acres or less.